



# Agenda and emergence: Contingent and planned activities in a meeting

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 19 September 2008

Received in revised form 14 October 2009

Accepted 15 October 2009

### Keywords:

Meeting talk

Conversation analysis

Multimodality

Emergence

Transition

Workplace studies

## ABSTRACT

The transition between phases of activities is a practical problem which participants in an interaction have to deal with routinely. In meetings, the sequence of phases of activity is often outlined by a written agenda. However, transitions still have to be accomplished by local interactional work of the participants. In a detailed conversation analytic case study based on video-data, it is shown how participants collaboratively accomplish an emergent interactional state of affairs (a break-like activity) which differs widely from the state of affairs which was projected by a written agenda (the next presentation), although in doing so, the participants still show their continuous orientation to the agenda. The paper argues that the reconstruction of emergent developments in interaction calls for a multimodal analysis of interaction, because the fine-grained multimodal co-ordination of bodily and verbal resources provides for opportunities of sequentially motivated, relevant next actions. These, however, can amount to emergent activity sequences, which may be at odds with the activity types which are projected by an interactional agenda or expected on behalf of some institutional routine.

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## 1. Aims of the paper

Our paper deals with a practical problem which participants regularly face when taking part in a meeting: they have to manage transitions between bounded activities which are prescheduled by an agenda (Bruxelles et al., 2009; Beach, 1993; Jefferson, 1984; Mehus, 2005; Modaff, 2003; Mondada and Traverso, 2005; Mondada, 2004a, 2006; Robinson, 1998; Robinson and Stivers, 2001). Such activities are, for instance, openings and closings of a conversation, the subsequent management of various topics of the agenda or the beginning of a presentation. Meetings are characterized by an agenda of topics or presentations which is fixed in advance and sent around in a written form, and which is provided for by a chairperson. Nevertheless, transitions between subsequent phases of activity as defined by the agenda fully remain an interactional issue which is managed locally. In other words, a planned agenda cannot specify the very details of actions which have to be implemented and coordinated locally in order to achieve the course of actions prefigured by the agenda (cf. Suchman, 1987; Heath and Luff, 2000; Nevile, 2004; Schmitt, 2007).

Our analysis will deal with the contingent and situated accomplishment of the agenda. We will argue that a multimodal approach needs to be taken in order to understand how an emergent course of action develops. We will analyze how a next presentation in a meeting is projected and how a break is *de facto* accomplished instead, delaying the presentation. This departure from a projected course of action is achieved in a stepwise and emergent way. We will especially draw attention to

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how this deviance is made accountable by a double orientation of the participants: they contribute to the break-like episode while still displaying their orientation to the work activities, by framing their break as an insertion with no official status. Our focus will be on the deployment of multimodal activities as means to manage this double orientation in an accountable way. We will show how, in doing so, multimodal resources are adapted to the local contingencies of the emergent course of collaborative action.

“Multimodality” has recently become a paramount term for characterizing a variety of approaches engaged in the analysis of social interaction supported by video-data (see, e.g. Goodwin, 2000; Norris, 2004; Sidnell and Stivers, 2005; Ventola et al., 2004). The emergence of this perspective is – in part – a reaction to technological developments and requirements which have made it possible not only to enrich but also to overstep the analytical potential of audio recordings and to establish video-data as an empirical basis for researching social interaction. Audio-visual data enable and force the analyst to face an increasingly available complexity of interactive phenomena, which extends far beyond the details one deals with when analyzing only *talk-in-interaction*. This complexity is due to the fact that the production of interactional order is based on various resources related to different modalities, which are simultaneously mobilized: speech (including verbal aspects, prosody, phonetics and vocal features), gaze, facial expression, head movement, gesture, body movement (like walking, standing up, running), position in space, proxemics, and the manipulation of objects.

In this article, we deal with the multimodal resources organizing social interaction from a conversation analytic perspective. Interaction is seen as a multimodal accomplishment of participants in any kind of face-to-face or technologically mediated situation. In this framework, video-based analysis of interaction is concerned with the detailed reconstruction of the ways in which multimodal resources are used in order to accomplish both the interactional order and its accountability. We will not focus on just one particular multimodal practice or resource (such as gaze, nodding or some kind of gesture). Instead, we start with the practical problems participants encounter in a face-to-face situation and we show how they collaboratively coordinate their multimodal activities in order to solve them. Methodologically, we aim at reconstructing the interactional organization both by sequential analysis and by taking into account the simultaneity of multimodal practices. An analysis which aims at the reconstruction of the organization of interaction has to account for the full range and the co-ordination of observable multimodal practices by which interactional structure is accomplished. In this paper, we show how different multimodal resources are coordinated in accomplishing a complex, collective course of actions which bring about a transition between different phases in a meeting. Thus, our analysis is focused on a meso-level of analysis: it neither focuses exclusively on the details of turn-transition and turn-construction nor does it embrace the overall shape of the meeting; instead we are concerned with transitions between larger activities, which are themselves brought about step by step within multimodal interaction.

First, we sketch our understanding of multimodality and interaction. Second, we turn to a detailed sequential analysis of our data. Finally, we summarize the upshots of our analysis in terms of some more general considerations about the multimodal organization of emergent courses of social interaction.

## 2. Multimodality from a conversation analytic perspective

Our multimodal approach to interaction is rooted in a tradition which has emerged around an interdisciplinary interest in the microanalytic study of interaction during the 1950s. At that time, the project initiated by Gregory Bateson which came to be known as the “Natural History of an Interview” (McQuown, 1971) and the work of Birdwhistell (1970) and Scheflen (1972) at the Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute in Philadelphia created an interdisciplinary interest in kinesics, gestures and verbal communication. Acknowledging the influence of Bateson and having been a student of Birdwhistell in Toronto, Erving Goffman participated in this context: he proposed with “Encounters” (1961) and “Behavior in Public Places” (1963) to study the interaction order (Goffman, 1983) and not to just focus on small groups, to study the co-ordination of action through multimodal resources and not only to focus on the verbal productions of the participants. His conception of the ‘face-to-face domain’ points out the importance of the audible and visible aspects of social interaction, as well as the need to focus on the entire range of perceivable behavior performed by participants in social encounters. His reference to microanalysis as the preferred mode of analysis serves as a starting point to formulate adequate approaches for the empirical study of the face-to-face domain. Although he was a very skilled and fine observer, Goffman himself did not scrutinize social interaction on the basis of transcripts or video tapes. This, however, is what researchers from the “context analysis”-school (such as Birdwhistell, Scheflen, and Kendon) did: they engaged in the multimodal analysis of video-data, taking up Goffman’s concepts and trying to explore them based on naturalistically recorded data (see Kendon, 1990 for an overview).

Aiming at a sequential analysis of the accomplishment of interaction in real time, conversation analysis (CA) based its findings on recordings of naturally occurring interactions. Although a majority of studies within CA have dealt with audio data and focused mainly on talk-in-interaction, video-data as well as the multimodal resources they make observable were considered relatively early on in this framework by scholars like Sacks and Schegloff (2002), Goodwin (1981), Schegloff (1984), and Heath (1986). These developments paved the way for an integration of Goffman’s view of the ‘interaction order’ with the conversation analytic view of talk-in-interaction as a sequentially organized process of intersubjective action. By ‘interaction order’, we understand the entire range of all multimodally coordinated, simultaneously performed and sequentially structured behaviors of all participants at any time over the course of an interaction. A multimodal analytical perspective on interaction therefore requires a video-based analysis of the accomplishment of interaction order, taking into

account its sequential emergence as well as the simultaneous co-ordination of various modes of bodily expression and action. Accordingly, our analysis will take into account a broad range of multimodal resources participants use in order to accomplish their interaction and make it accountable in terms of the practical purposes of the situation at hand.

### 3. The data: the practical organization of a meeting

The video segment we are going to analyze is taken from a larger corpus of regular meetings in the editing department of an international strategy consultancy in Germany.<sup>1</sup> Meetings are multiparty conversations which are often characterised by an organizational fingerprint (agendas, a planned order of presenters, a schedule, a chairperson, etc.). CA as well discourse analytic studies focussed on turn-taking mostly with regard to the moderator's role (Morgenthaler, 1990); organizational activities (Cuff and Sharrock, 1985), interruptive strategies (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris, 1996), request strategies (Bargiela, 1994; Peskett, 1987), the interactive process of defining the problem at hand (Anderson et al., 1987), the accomplishment of transition between on-going and subsequent actions like “from coffee break back to work” (Atkinson et al., 1978), topic management (Linde, 1991); openings and closings (Boden, 1994); negotiation (Boden, 1995); decision-making (Huisman, 2001); arguing (Saft, 2004), display of concession (Saft, 2001), the interactive constitution of hierarchy (Schmitt, 2002), status-related ways of conflict talk (O'Donnell, 1990), management style (Schmitt, 2006), the interactional importance of ‘role’ (Housley, 1999), the production of scientific knowledge (Mondada, 2005), ‘doing being plurilingual’ (Mondada, 2004b), and the manipulation of objects like whiteboards (Schmitt, 2001). Monographs on meetings from an interactionist perspective are still rare (Boden, 1994; Müller, 1997; Dannerer, 1999; Meier, 1997; Domke, 2006; Asmuss and Svennevig, 2009).

The segments analyzed are taken from a series of meetings of an editing department within a big computer company, which take place every three months. These meetings have been documented over the course of three years. Every meeting lasts for two days and is filled with a comprehensive agenda including organizational matters, the distribution of tasks, the development of new strategies, the constitution of new working groups, etc. Members of the group perform presentations, which last up to one hour. They are quite demanding in terms of the listeners' attention. All presentations are scheduled on a written agenda, which all participants have at their fingertips. It provides a strict time frame for the meeting. Fourteen members of the editing department take part in the meeting, which is chaired by Silke, the head of the department. At the time that our video segment starts, the meeting had already been running for nearly three hours.

In the transcripts, only vocal activities will be represented. We decided to refer the reader/viewer to stills taken from the video, but not to represent visual action in the transcripts by coding. In our view, annotating visual action is appropriate when systematically, i.e., continuously, focusing on the use of selected bodily resources in interaction (such as gaze, gestures and body posture) in a study which is based on a collection of cases. In this paper, however, we aim at a comprehensive multimodal analysis of a single case. This requires us to attend to the full array of visual (and vocal) actions which are performed during the course of the interaction and which involve all different sorts of multimodal resources. In this case, the attempt at annotating visual interaction in the transcript poses a dilemma: either all different multimodal resources used by all participants are thoroughly annotated – this would amount to a transcript which is unreadable; or only those actions are annotated which are, as a result of the analysis, judged to be relevant for the course of the interaction – this could be mistaken as a selective representation, leaving the reader with biased (i.e. confirming) evidence only, which seems to suggest that nothing else happened. Moreover, limitations of space in transcripts make it impossible to render the details of visual action as precisely and as comprehensively as might be needed. Thus, we decided to describe visual action in just those features and in the way it is relevant for interaction in the analysis itself (but not in the transcript) and to represent just those stills which allow the reader to understand and test the claims that we are making.

### 4. Going off work and back: the multimodal accomplishment of transitions

The extract we analyse documents a practical problem, emerging at the completion of one point on the agenda: a first presentation is brought to a closure, the next presentation, which is scheduled on the agenda, is projected, but it is not launched yet. Instead, an intermediate phase emerges, in which a “break-like time-out” is accomplished, which lasts for about 2 min (Section 4.1). This produces a practical problem for the participants: how is the current phase of action to be categorized and how can the working context for the next presentation be re-established (Section 4.2)? Our analysis will concentrate on the multimodal accomplishment of the transition from work to time-out and back again to work.

#### 4.1. Transition I: going off work

##### 4.1.1. Moving from one activity to another as an emergent collective accomplishment

We join the action when Regina (RE) finishes her presentation; Gisela (GI), supposed to be the next speaker, and Silke (SI), the chairperson, announce that there will be no break. But progressively a new activity emerges in a stepwise way, which is *not* the next presentation. The following transcript presents the audio recording of the excerpt considered.

<sup>1</sup> Data from this corpus are also analyzed by Schmitt (2001a,b, 2002, 2006) and Schmitt and Heidtmann (2002).

Excerpt 1<sup>2</sup> [tape 2; 1:13:05.3-1:13:45.6]

- 01 (6.0)
- 02 RE: <<p>ähm:> ja, wenn noch irgendwelche  
uhm: yes if still any  
<<p>uhm:> **yes, if there are still any**
- 03 fragen sind, jetzt zu: (1.5) dem thema -  
questions are now concerning the topic  
**questions now concerning the topic**
- 04 (0.9) ähm rechtschreibprüfung?  
(0.9) **uhm checking of orthography?**
- 05 (3.2)
- 06 ansonsten wär von meiner seite aus ähm  
otherwise would be from my side seen ehm  
**otherwise as far as I am concerned**
- 07 <<acc>das dann abgeschlossen.>  
this then finish-PART  
<<acc>**I am finished**
- 08 (2.1)
- 09 SI: ((nods to GI)) <<p>gisela>
- 10 GI: ja wir machen nahtlos weiter mit  
yes we go seamlessly on with  
**yes we will go on right away with**
- 11 standards und danach die pause?  
**standards and then the break?**
- 12 ?: **mhm**
- 13 GI: ich glaube auch dass ich nich ne ganze  
I think also that I not INDEF-CL entire  
**I also think that I won't need a full**
- 14 GI: [stunde] brauchen werde.  
[hour ] need-INF shall  
**[hour ]**
- 15 RE: (((clears throat)))
- 16 (1.2)
- 17 GI: ((clears throat))
- 18 (4.4)
- 19 GI: ähm [ich hab ]  
**ähm [I have ]**
- 20 SI: [anja ka]nnst du mir mal=n  
anja can you me PRT INDEF-CL  
**[Anja can ] you just pass me**

<sup>2</sup> The transcript is edited according to the GAT conventions (Selting et al., 1998), which are presented in Section 6.

- 21 wasser rübergeben;  
water pass-INF over  
**a bottle of water**
- 22 AJ: ja gerne-  
yes welcome  
**yes you're welcome**
- 23 (1.0)
- 24 GI: erst mal noch jeder mit trinken versorgen?  
at first still everybody with drink-INF supply-INF?  
**does everybody want to have something to drink first?**
- 25 JO: ja.  
**yes.**
- 26 AD: ja:  
**yes:**
- 27 GI: gute idee ne?  
**good idea isn't it?**
- 28 AD: danke gisela ((laughs))  
**thank you Gisela ((laughs))**
- 29 (3.0)

In what follows, we will analyze the way in which the end of Regina's presentation is managed by the announcement that there will be no break (Section 4.1.2). We will then discuss the way in which the participants first align with this announcement (Section 4.1.3), but then organize their subsequent conduct in a way different from what is projected by picking up drinks (Section 4.1.4). The analysis will focus on the progressive shape of the upcoming action and on the emergent character of its categorization, as it is collectively accomplished by the participants' orientations and actions.

#### 4.1.2. Announcing that the next action is not a break

When Regina ends her talk, she first creates an opportunity for asking questions, not taken by any participant; then she explicitly closes her talk. We can notice that her last turn-constructive unit is oriented towards the completion of *her* task; she neither projects any further action nor any next speaker:

#### Excerpt 1.1 (detail from excerpt 1)

- 06 ansonsten wär von meiner seite aus ähm  
otherwise would be from my side seen PRT  
**otherwise as far as I am concerned**
- 07 <<acc>das dann abgeschlossen.>  
this then finish-PART  
**I am finished**

However, when making this concluding statement, Regina looks first at Silke, then at Gisela and finally again at Silke. With her gaze, she orients to them as possible organizers of the next action. At this sequential position, a transition relevance place of particular importance is created:

- It is the moment where a change in the participation format is expected, moving from a long multi-unit turn and a monological activity to a next activity, which can be performed either by the chairperson or by a next speaker.
- It is the moment where a transition from one presentation to the next presentation is expected on the basis of the written agenda previously distributed to the participants.
- Although a next presentation is expected, the detailed management of the transition to the next presentation is not foreseen, neither by Regina nor by the written plan.

So, the global layout of the meeting's program, as it is prefigured by the written agenda, has to be interpreted indexically, i.e., with respect to the details of the current interactional situation, which have emerged in a way which could not be anticipated within the context of the written agenda itself. Instead, it is implemented interactively and progressively by the following appropriate embodied actions. Participants are inevitably in a sequential position where a range of possible next actions can arise and where they have to decide on who will take precisely which initiative by which kind of verbal and bodily practice. Furthermore, these practices have an important role in re-shaping the activity, the participation, and the context of what will follow.



**Picture 1.** The spatial distribution of speakers: the last speaker Regina (right) is still at the head of the table, and the next speaker Gisela standing is not yet in a position for initiating her presentation (line 15).

The next step is represented by Silke selecting Gisela as the next speaker:

**Excerpt 1.2 (detail from excerpt 1)**

09 SI: ((nods to GI)) <<p> gisela>

Silke does not initiate the presentation which is scheduled next on the agenda herself, but she orients to her organizational role as the chairperson of the meeting.<sup>3</sup> Her selection of Gisela only projects the next speaker, but also the next activity within the meeting, i.e., a presentation, because Gisela is the next planned presenter.

As soon as Regina ends her closing turn-constructural unit (line 07), the projected next presenter Gisela moves forward and begins to arrange the documents in front of her. When addressed by Silke, she does not immediately initiate the next presentation, but instead makes an announcement about what will come next:

**Excerpt 1.3 (detail from excerpt 1)**

10 GI: ja wir machen nahtlos weiter mit  
yes we go seamlessly on with  
**yes we will go on right away with**

11 standards und danach die pause?  
**standards and then the break?**

12 ?: mhm

13 GI: ich glaube auch dass ich nich ne ganze  
I think also that I not INDEF-CL entire  
**I also think that I won't need a full**

14 GI: [stunde] brauchen werde.  
[hour ] need-INF shall  
**[hour ]**

15 RE:[((clears throat))]

16 (1.2)

Instead of starting right away with her paper, Gisela only announces its imminence (“nahtlos weiter”/“go on directly”, line 10) and adds a reference to the following activity, the break (“danach die Pause”/“then the break”, line 11). The precise format of this announcement, which projects the course of things to come from Gisela’s perspective, and its realization instead of other possible next steps (doing a presentation, doing a break) can be elucidated if we look at the way in which this sequential position is anchored in the space and the material environment of the talk. Regina and Gisela are still occupying the same places as they did during Regina’s presentation, so that Gisela is not yet in a spatial position from which to start her presentation [Picture 1].

Gisela’s formulation of her announcement of the next two activities is oriented to the possible relevance of a break (“danach die pause”/“then the break”, line 11). The limitation of the length of the presentation (“nich die ganze stunde brauchen werde”/“will not need the entire hour”, lines 13–15) also orients towards the lapse of time until a break is due and

<sup>3</sup> Silke has already displayed this role during the previous pause, when Regina provided a possible space for questions (cf. line 03 in Extract 1): at this point, Silke visibly looks at the group, monitoring if somebody selects for asking a question. She is the only person who scrutinizes the room in that way.





**Picture 2.** Anna: “running away in a quick and discrete manner” (line 13).

reduces it with respect to the scheduled time. At the same time, this statement opens up the possibility of having a break right now, because it implies that inserting a short break would not cause a problem for the time schedule. These temporal references show that the absence of a break is dealt with as needing to be accounted for and recognize that this moment could be seen as an opportunity for a break.

#### 4.1.3. Orienting to the pursuit of the work-activity

Gisela’s announcement and account are responded to by the audience remaining seated and still immersed in work activities such as looking at papers, writing down notes, or looking at the prior presenter Regina. The audience at this point is waiting for the next activity to begin, tacitly and bodily aligning with Gisela’s proposals.

At the end of her turn (line 14), Gisela stands up, while Regina is still arranging her papers. At that very moment, a member of the audience, Anna (AN), also stands up and quickly starts to move along the wall towards the door. This movement is publicly designed as “running away” in a quick and discrete manner: her upper body is slightly bent forward, her head oriented to the floor, and her left arm is squared in front of her [Picture 2]. In this way, Anna orients to the pursuit of the collective work (cf. Goodwin, 1987): on the one hand, she configures her movement in a way that minimizes her perturbation on the projected next presentation, thus recognizing it as the principal line of action; on the other hand, she chooses a precise sequential moment – just *after* Gisela’s proposals and *before* the next presentation begins – which provides a slot for inserting another urgent activity. Anna’s run thus exhibits a sensitivity to both of the sequential possibilities opened up by Gisela’s turn: continuing to work and having a break.

However, with respect to the activities projected by Gisela’s announcement, this “run” has an equivocal status: while it is performed so as to display its status as not intending to challenge the relevance of the transition to the next presentation, it nevertheless breaks up the global spatial configuration of the listeners. As such, it has an erosive potential for the pursuit of the main activity: one person leaving the interaction points to the possibility of other actions which are not in line with the projected activity and its participation framework. This equivocal character is evidenced by what follows. The run is *not* looked at by the other participants, except, slightly later, by Gisela and Silke, but it is noticed peripherally. Although the movement is not immediately responded to by the audience with analogous conducts, Silke and Gisela soon engage in activities which suspend the projected line of action in favour of an insertion.

#### 4.1.4. Accomplishing an insertion

In what follows, the participants finally overtly cooperate in accomplishing an inserted activity. However, they do so while still displaying an orientation to the pending relevance of pursuing with the following presentation as the next activity which is due. While Regina is leaving her place, Gisela initiates a new turn with a hesitation marker, a first person pronoun, and an auxiliary (“ich hab”/“I have”) projecting more to come.

#### Excerpt 1.4 (detail from excerpt 1)

18 (4.4)

19 GI: ähm [ich hab]  
       ~~ähm~~ [I have]

- 20 SI: [anja ka]nnst du mir mal=n  
 anja can you me PRT INDEF-CL  
**[Anja can] you just pass me**
- 21 wasser rübergeben;  
 water pass-INF over  
**a bottle of water**
- 22 AJ: ja gerne-  
 yes welcome  
**yes you're welcome**
- 23 (1.0)
- 24 GI: erst mal noch jeder mit trinken versorgen?  
 at first still everybody with drink-INF supply-INF?  
**does everybody want to have something to drink first?**
- 25 JO: ja  
**yes.**
- 26 AD: ja:  
**yes.**
- 27 GI: gute idee ne?  
**good idea isn't it?**
- 28 AD: danke gisela ((laughs))
- 29 (3.0)

Silke overlaps with Gisela (who then cuts off her turn, line 19) and asks Anja (AJ) to pass her a bottle of mineral water. While Gisela is still oriented to the continuation of the professional activity, Silke identifies the same moment as an opportunity to insert some minor alternative activities, just as Anna did before with her run. Silke's request, uttered without lowering her voice, is not an announcement of a break; however, it amounts to a break-like activity without declaring it as such. Anja complies to the request verbally ("ja gerne"/"yes you're welcome", line 22) as well as bodily, by standing up and going next to the window behind her, where the drinks are. At this point, there are four persons standing: Gisela preparing to go to the front position, Regina abandoning that position, Anja going to the window, Anna leaving the room. At this moment, the spatial alignment differs from the previous one, where everybody was sitting at their place. A sequential position is created where the next action has still not begun and where other activities, even if minimized and formatted as side activities (such as the "run"), are initiated by several participants as inserted activities.

In this sequential position, Gisela has three alternatives: to go to the front and begin right away, to invite other participants to take a drink or to wait in silence and to monitor what goes on. Her bodily posture is congruent with this open sequential position and takes the form of a "body torque" (Schegloff, 1998): she stands still at her place, in a posture that can be either turned to the front or to the participants. The other participants are still at their places, in a waiting posture: they are still oriented to the continuation of the work-activity. Gisela now suspends her alignment with her previous announcements and makes the break-like activities an official focus of the on-going interaction, thereby sanctioning them as appropriate for the moment. She invites the listeners verbally ("erst mal noch jeder mit trinken versorgen"/"at first supply everybody with something to drink?", line 24) and by a gesture indicating the drinks [Picture 3].



Picture 3. "At first everybody have something to drink?" + presentation gesture.



Thus, Gisela takes up Silke's initiative and transforms it from a personal request (done by the chairperson, who is also the head of the editing department) to a general invitation to all participants. Still, Silke and Gisela verbally highlight the accountability of what they are doing as an inserted action: Silke uses the softening particle "mal" for her request and Gisela contextualizes the insertion by "erst mal" ("at first") which limits it and points to the fact that the projected action (providing drinks) is only prefatory to a subsequent action which is suspended but not cancelled. Gisela's invitation ("noch jeder mit trinken versorgen"/"supply everybody with something to drink?", line 24) assigns a want to the addressees as an inference from Silke's request. By not producing a modal verb, she does not take a stance towards her responsibility for the invitation and she does not make explicit if she is making a request, a license, or an offer. This reduced grammatical construction still seems to display an implicit orientation to the minor, inserted character of the invitation. It rather leaves it to the recipients to decide for themselves how to define the modal aspect and thus its pragmatic upshot, as well as how to respond to it. The same is displayed by her gesture, which points in the direction of the drinks. Following her invitation, the participants stand up and go to the window where the drinks are. The participation framework of the presentation is definitely and publicly suspended.

#### 4.1.5. Summary I: the collective multimodal accomplishment of an insertion

The brief segment analyzed here shows how participants achieve interactively and in a locally organized and contingent way a collective orientation. The transition between the completed activity and the next activity to come is here achieved in an emergent way, progressively defined and re-defined by a series of alignments between subsequent actions. Starting with the "run", there is a continuous erosion of the collective orientation towards the projected presentation and the insertion of something which is at the same time treated as not being an official pause *and* configured as being a break-like transition.<sup>4</sup> This transitory activity increasingly becomes a shared orientation of the participants. Paradoxically, this insertion is brought about by activities which themselves are framed as still displaying an alignment to the relevance of the initially projected action, i.e., the presentation. Every next inserted action, however, opens up the possibility for further inserted actions, which finally work to suspend the projected presentation as a collective orientation.

At first, Gisela delays the break to be taken later (lines 10–11). She thus proposes a general orientation towards the agenda of the ongoing work. This orientation is stabilized by the aligning response of the participants. Nevertheless, at this point some side actions are inserted by various participants, practically achieving the categorization of this slot as transitory. Gisela finally aligns with these actions by transforming them from side actions performed individually to a public collective insertion (line 24). Interestingly, this insertion is never categorized – neither verbally nor bodily – as a "break", although this category is most relevant for the official organization of the schedule of the meeting (cf. line 11). The practical, situated, progressive categorization as "not yet the break", but as still some kind of pause, in its very ambiguity, is an emergent collective accomplishment. The way the "no work activity" is accomplished – in the place where work is projected both by the agenda and by the previous interaction (especially Gisela's announcement to continue to work, turning to the next presentation) – is still restricted by the overall orientation to stick to the agenda. This orientation is signaled by the way in which the "break-like time out" is both mutually accomplished and accounted for.

#### 4.2. Transition II: the collective re-establishment of the working context

The transition lasts for about 2 min. We will now concentrate on how, after that, the working context is re-established in a collaborative way.

##### 4.2.1. Projecting the re-start of the work-activity

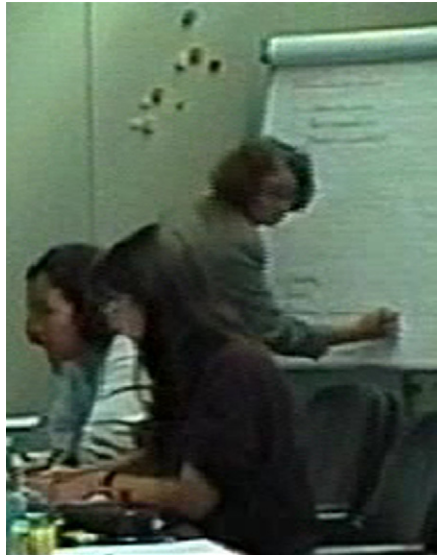
We re-join the action when Gisela is just about to finish writing notes on the flip-chart. She turns the upper part of her body and gazes to the window side, where most of the participants are standing [Picture 4].

Here we can see a general aspect of the sequential and the simultaneous organization of two actions: an ongoing action is brought to a close (writing down notes as a preparation for the presentation), while a next action already begins (gaze orientation as a display of monitoring of the conditions for the re-establishment of work). Again, "body torque" is a postural resource which allows to display this double orientation.

Gisela then returns to the head of the table where the presenters give their talk. Like the "run" analyzed above, Gisela's walk is designed to be interpreted as and for projecting a next collectively relevant action. Thus, her orientation towards the head of the table serves as a signal that she is ready to re-start work again. On her way back, she puts the cap on her pencil, and, arriving at the table, puts down her papers, looks at her wrist watch [Picture 5] and steps into the position at the front desk, which is the position for (the next) presentation: she crosses her arms behind her back and anchors herself in a stable position. Doing so, she shows that she is ready to (re)-start [Picture 6].<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The participants thus display in various, coordinated ways that they collaboratively orient to a collective activity which, however, does not have a vernacular denominator. Given the unofficial and, with respect to the officially announced sequence of events, potentially subversive nature of the activity, this "lexical gap" may not come as a surprise. Still more generally, it can be seen in line with Schegloff's discovery of the action of "confirming allusions" as another case of a socially ordered and systematically describable action/activity which is methodically organized by members without being categorized or routinely described as such (cf. Schegloff, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> It might be noted that the projection of the next presentation is exclusively accomplished gesturally. The structure of Gisela's actions and their import for the other participants thus can only be accounted for by analyzing non-vocal activities.



**Picture 4.** Gisela ending one action and projecting the subsequent one.



**Picture 5.** Gisela looking at her watch.



**Picture 6.** Presentational posture (I).

While resting in this “ready-for-presentation” posture, her body is directed to the place where the audience of her presentation will sit, her head is turned slightly to her right, lowered a little bit, while her gaze is oriented towards the window to her right (where the future addressees are still engaged in drinking and chatting, i.e. in break-like activities).

At this point, Gisela deals with the practical problem of how to get the others to re-align to her orientation to work. This is further complicated by the fact that her future addressees’ on-going actions differ with regard to work relevancies: close to her, Silke, Regina and Anna are working, discussing matters of organizational concern, while at the window, other members of the group are chatting. Announcing in a loud voice that work can be taken up again could be appropriate for the group standing near the window. But this solution turns out to be problematic with regard to the other group. Gisela cannot be sure that this business talk between Silke, Regina and Anja is already finished. If not, a loudly uttered announcement would rudely disrupt their line of work.

#### 4.2.2. Performing a double orientation

As a solution to this practical problem, Gisela again leaves her presentation position. Silke briefly turns her head towards Gisela, responding to this movement. Gisela then starts to speak, addressing the others with the question:

##### Excerpt 2 [tape 2; 1:36:08.2-1:36:47.3]

- 01 GI: okay. (.) habt ihr alle?  
**okay have you all got?**
- 02 (5.2)
- 03 GI: <<f>seid ihr versorgt?>  
**<<f>are you supplied?>**
- 04 (0.9)
- 05 WO: hat irgendjemand den öffener gesehen?  
has anybody the opener seen?  
**has anybody seen the opener?**
- 06 (1.5)
- 07 AJ: [der is da hinten ] gelandet  
it is there in the back land-PART  
**[it ended up over ] there**
- 08 AN: de [(d/ a/<<all>ah da is er ja>)]  
it PRT there is it PRT  
**it[( <<all>oh so there it is >)]**
- 09 WO: ah ja  
**oh yeah**
- 10 AN?:((clears throat))
- 11 (2.7)
- 12 SI: <<f> wir machen hiernach ne pause.> okay?  
we make hereafter INDEF-CL pause okay?  
**<<f> we will have a break after that.> okay?**
- 13 (2.1)
- 14 GI: ich mach des den teil über (0.5) standards (0.8)  
I make the the part about standards  
**I will present the the part concerning (0.5) standards (0.8)**
- 15 quasi im rund rundumschlag-  
as it were in DEF-CL sweep sweeping blow  
**in sort of a sweep sweeping blow-**

Her gaze selects the members at the window as addressees. The segment starts with an “okay”, a transition marker which projects the closure of the insertion (see Bangerter and Clark, 2003; Beach, 1993). It is followed by the question “habt ihr alle?”/“have you all got?” (line 01). The question makes a response to the request relevant, re-orienting the addressees back to work as soon as they have completed their drinks. But there is no reaction from the members who are still conversing at the window side (line 02). During this silence following her turn, Gisela takes steps towards her seat on the left side of the



Picture 7. Silke glancing at Gisela.

table near the top. She finally moves into Silke's field of view, thus possibly reminding her that the next presentation to be performed by Gisela is still due. Silke for a moment glances up towards her, but she cannot catch Gisela's eye: at this precise moment, Gisela is looking straight downward at her feet [Picture 7].

While Gisela continues to walk to her seat, Silke starts to glance at the window side, where the other members of the team are still engaged in drinking activities; then she leans back in her seat, pulls herself a little bit upright and cranes her neck. Silke is now monitoring what is going on in a way which is perceivably and accountably done. She is ostensibly affecting the field of vision of those who are being monitored in a way which is to be understood as a request to return to work [Picture 8].

Reaching her seat, Gisela picks up the white folder, which, at her first attempt to establish herself as the next presenter, she had put on the right side in front of the table. Simultaneously, she turns her head and gazes towards the window side, while Silke keeps on monitoring. Gisela manifestly “intrudes” Anna's field of view with her right hand, passing closely the face of the senior editor [Picture 9]. Anna follows the movement, rearranges her papers and assumes a more upright position. Gisela issues a similar request as before, which again receives no uptake:

#### Excerpt 2.1 (detail from excerpt 2)

- 03 GI: <<f>seid ihr versorgt?  
 <<f>are you supplied?  
 04 (0.9)

At the end of her turn, Gisela turns her head to the left and looks at the folder she is now holding in her right hand [Picture 10]. Gisela realizes a double orientation by employing different multimodal resources for each line of action. Verbally, she still focuses on the care of the ones addressed (line 03). She acts in a way as a host to invite the closing of the intake. She does not supply the others with drinks, but she adapts her invitation to return to work to the current activity pursued by the others, taking it as a point of departure for initiating its closure. After she arrives at the head of the table, she steps into her “ready-for-presentation posture” once more and places the white folder in front of her. In contrast to her verbal action, holding up the white folder thus displays her projection of the next action, i.e., a proposal to align to the re-start of her presentation.

As to Gisela's spatial moves, we have two rounds of walking: (1) from the head position to her seat where the white file is picked up, and (2) from her seat back to the head position of the table [Fig. 1].

While the orientation to “drinking” was more salient on her way out of the head position, the competing orientation to “re-start working” prevails when she returns to the head position. This walk displays a determined orientation to work, especially displayed by the white folder as a “symbol” for the next presentation. Meanwhile, the window faction continues to



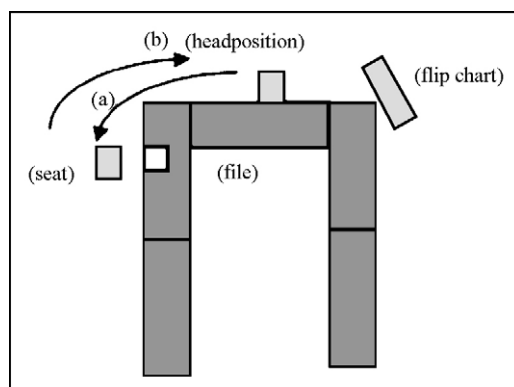
Picture 8. Gisela looking at the file, Anja reading; Silke monitoring the room.



**Picture 9.** Gisela crosses Anna's visual field.



**Picture 10.** Gisela holding the white file.



**Fig. 1.** Gisela's walk back and forth.



participate in one – using Goffman's terms – “single focused encounter”: Wolfram, Anna, and Anja are still busy in “supplying drinks”.

#### Excerpt 2.2 (detail from excerpt 2)

05 WO: hat irgendjemand den öffener gesehen?  
has anybody the opener seen?  
**has anybody seen the opener?**

06 (1.5)

07 Aj: [der is da hinten ] gelandet  
it is there in the back land-PART  
**[it ended up over ]there**

08 AN: de [(d/ a/ <<all>ah da is er ja>)]  
it PRT there is it PRT  
**it[( <<all>oh so there it is>)]**

09 WO: ah ja  
**oh yeah**

10 AN?:((clears throat))

11 (2.7)

As Gisela reaches the head of the table again, Silke is still monitoring what is going on at the window. She now turns her head to Gisela, who stands on her right and who looks away from Silke to her right, so that once again their eyes do not meet [Picture 11]. Noticing that Gisela is ready to start, Silke turns to her left, focusing on the members at the window. Speaking up in a loud voice, she assumes her role as the chairperson calling them to order [Picture 12]:

#### Excerpt 2.3 (detail from excerpt 2)

12 SI: <<f> wir machen hiernach ne pause.> okay?  
we make hereafter INDEF-CL pause okay?  
**<<f> we will have a break after that.> okay?**

13 (2.1)

#### 4.2.3. Monitoring as alignment to others' actions

Silke's new call to order is phrased in a declarative mode encoding a collective agent (“we”), which exhibits her being both a concerned member and the chairperson, who is in a legitimate position to define and to reinforce the agenda of the meeting. It is the endpoint of a sequence of actions in which Silke has been monitoring the rest of the group. This line of action is clearly aligned with Gisela. Silke makes her monitoring activities increasingly salient, thus emphasizing the relevance of the re-establishment of work. She first monitors the group by turning her head, gazing and bending the upper part of her body in order to have a clear look. This inconspicuous form of monitoring is followed by a sort of “demonstrating



Picture 11. Silke trying to catch Gisela's eye.



Picture 12. Call to order; presentation posture (II).

monitoring”: when Gisela makes her second request (line 01), Silke climbs up in her seat [Picture 8]. The next step is characterized by leaning extensively back in her chair and stroking back her hair with both of her hands [Picture 12]. This happens just before she executes her call to order (line 12).

In sum, we can notice three simultaneous orientations: (1) Gisela and the window faction are orienting to the consumption context; (2) simultaneously Gisela orients towards the re-establishment of the working context; (3) Silke is exclusively oriented towards the re-establishment of the working context in trying to bring this transition to an end.

#### 4.2.4. Starting the presentation

Right after Silke’s “call to order” – while the members quickly return from the window in order to take their seats again – Gisela immediately starts her presentation [Picture 13]:

#### Excerpt 2.4 (detail from excerpt 2)

14 GI: ich mach des den teil über (0.5) standards (0.8)  
 I make the the part about standards  
*I will present the the part concerning (0.5) standards (0.8)*

15 quasi im rund rundumschlag-  
 as it were in DEF-CL sweep sweeping blow  
*in sort of a sweep sweeping blow-*



Picture 13. Start of presentation [09 GI: <ich mach/<I present].

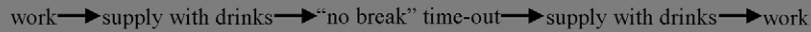


Fig. 2. Overall organization of the activity sequence.

Within the first minute of Gisela's presentation, the returning members progressively re-orient towards the head of the table, until a common orientation to work is formally re-established: Gisela is the official speaker who holds the floor, with all participants focusing on her presentation.

#### 4.2.5. Summary II

In order to re-start the meeting, Gisela and Silke collaboratively work for organizing a common single focused interactional space in re-uniting the different orientations which emerged in the course of the time-out. Gisela's verbal resources (i.e. reduced volume, selected addressees, question format) and spatial moves can be seen as oriented to the formal hierarchy of the editing group. Gisela is in a kind of "sandwich position": as one of the coordinators, she is subordinate to Silke, but superior to the other participants at the window. Gisela uses a "divided recipient design" as a solution to the problem of simultaneously addressing recipients who – as far as their formal status is concerned – need to be treated differently. She uses spatial resources to "address" her superior and to get her to do her work as a chairperson.<sup>6</sup> So, she presents herself to her boss as being available and willing to start without rudely disrupting the business talk. All this is done without Gisela saying a single word to Silke, nor even looking in her direction at all. Meanwhile, she orients her gaze, her body and her talk constantly towards the group at the window side. This "divided recipient design" is made possible by the co-ordination of different multimodal resources, which can be used to carry out simultaneously more than one action.

This analysis shows how multimodal resources are exploited both by Gisela and Silke in order to jointly deal with systematic problems of achieving the transition to a next activity. These problems are very likely to appear in any kind of meeting. Looking at the relation between the transition from work to a "no break" time-out and the transition from the "no break" insertion back to work, we see a mirror-like structure [Fig. 2]. It emerges as the result of joint action of different participants applying different, but structurally aligned modal resources.

Looking at the transition from work to "no break" time-out, we find quite a long period of time where all participants display an orientation towards work, although the announced direct continuation (cf. excerpt 1, line 06) is evidently delayed. Looking at the transition from "no break" time-out back to work, we see that the drink consumption serves as a cue to re-contextualize and make relevant the aspects which lead to the "no break" time-out and to address the participants who are still busy at the window side.

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

Our analysis provides evidence for the claim of the irreducible situatedness of the constitution of action (cf. Garfinkel, 1967) and it shows how situated emergence plays its role within participants' orientations to a pre-defined global agenda of action. Even if courses of action are scheduled in advance by an agenda and even if all participants reciprocally orient to this agenda, the interactional implementation of this agenda still has to be accomplished with a permanent sensitivity to the ever changing local situational conditions of action. This process requires continuous reciprocal monitoring and sequential as well as simultaneous co-ordination of the activities of all participants involved in the collective action.

Our analysis shows how the situatedness of action can open up emergent lines of action, which can (at least temporarily) suspend the realization of a projected action, although participants are still ostensibly oriented towards its relevance. Most interestingly, this deviance is not necessarily accomplished by behaviors which would simply contradict the agenda. An initial alignment – ostensibly accounted for as such – with the projected action can finally lead to an interactional state of affairs which does not conform to the overall course projected by the agenda. This emergent dynamics is a sequential accomplishment. It results from two properties of action: its potential to project a range of possible next actions and its local sensitivity. Each action opens up a range of possible, locally accountable, suitable next actions. This range of possibilities almost always includes – at least as somewhat peripheral, but nevertheless accountable possibilities – actions which do not converge with a strongly projected global course of action. These potential deviations, however, are systematically related to the properties of the ongoing actions which are themselves produced in line with the global orientation. The deviating potential of any action can unfold "smoothly" and almost without notice, because every next action is locally sensitive, i.e., it adapts itself to its sequential (and other) contextual conditions in order to be an accountable local continuation. Thus, as our empirical case shows, a sequence of increasing deviation from the initial projected action can emerge, which, however, neither implies a clear-cut

<sup>6</sup> In this way, and more generally, we can differentiate at least three types of orientation on the basis of their perceivable multimodal character: (1) In the case of a unique (focused) orientation, all perceivable aspects of a participant's behaviour are oriented towards (an) other participant(s). Gaze, head position, gesticulation, facial expression, body posture and verbal activity are directed in a consistent and convergent way toward the same target. (2) In the case of a multiple orientation, different aspects of the perceivable behaviour of a participant are directed to different addressees: While the lower part of the body – especially pelvis and feet position – can be oriented towards co-participant A, the upper part of the body, gesticulation, facial expression and verbal activity can be directed to co-participant B (cf. Kendon, 1990; Schegloff, 1998). (3) In the case of an implicit multiple orientation – which is the case we have analyzed above – there is no perceivable difference with our first case.

sequential breach, where an opposing activity has taken place, nor an official re-definition of the global praxeological orientation of the participants. This sequential emergence of deviation is a collective process, which rests on the local realization of multiple next possible adequate actions. It is not any participant in particular who is responsible for such a development. It is rather the product of systematic potentials of actions, which provide for the stepwise accumulation of contingent choices, which increasingly create an interactional gestalt of its own. Therefore, we have seen that a given sequential position opens up a range of possible next actions that can instate multiple relevancies, which in turn can be oriented to simultaneously by one or more participants exploiting different multimodal resources and practices.

In this paper we proposed an extension of the conversation analytic sequential reconstruction of the interactional order. Until now, conversation analysts have mainly explored the organization of interaction on the basis of talk. In this paper, we have argued for a sequential analysis of a wide range of modalities in a more comprehensive, praxeological sense. We have tried to show that interactional order, at least in cases like the one we analyzed, can only be accounted for by taking multimodality into account. This approach is a generalization of Sacks' premise that there is "order at all points" (Sacks, 1984), resting on the *a priori*-assumption that any event in any modality of bodily action may be potentially relevant – i.e., exploited as such – for the constitution of interactional structures and can be used by participants as a resource to contribute to its accomplishment. Consequently, the analysis does not focus on the co-ordination of selected modalities (such as, e.g., gaze and syntax for turn-taking), but rather takes a comprehensive, case-based approach to sequential co-ordination. It aims at a reconstruction of the unfolding interactional process as it is constituted by all locally relevant modalities of action. This mode of analysis has to be accountable to the full range of praxeological phenomena which can be discovered on the audio-visual recording. In pursuing this line of analysis, the goal, firstly, is a thorough reconstruction of the order of social action in face-to-face interaction. Secondly, this approach yields innovative insights into the relevance and into procedures of situated practices (in the sense of Goodwin, 2003), such as, in our example, walking and taking postural stances, which can be discovered by a detailed and comprehensive multimodal, data-driven sequential analysis.

## Acknowledgement

The authors thank Marja-Leena Sorjonen and two reviewers for detailed comments and valuable suggestions, which helped to improve the paper a lot.

## Appendix A. Transcription convention

The excerpts are transcribed according to GAT (Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem; Selting et al., 1998).

[ ]	Segments of talk spoken in overlap
(.)	Micro-pause
(1.2)	Pause measured in seconds
strEssed	Stressed vowel/syllable
.	Falling final intonation
;	Slightly falling final intonation
-	Level final intonation
,	Slightly rising final intonation
?	Rising final intonation
(unclear)	dubious hearing
<<f>	> forte, loud voice
<<p>	> piano, soft voice
<<acc>	> accelerando, accelerating
((laughs))	description of non-verbal activities
free	Free English translation
PRT	Particle
-CL	clitic
-PART	Participle
-2SG	2nd person singular
-INF	Infinitive
-DEF	Definite article
-INDEF	Indefinite article

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